

THE RITUAL COMPLEX OF MANGALA

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The counterpart of the ear-boring *mangala* for a girl was the *mangala* performed when she attained puberty. This was called 'polé kanda mangala' or '*mangala* performed on the sighting of defilement'. The menstrual flow was regarded as defiling, and formerly a woman observed seclusion for three days during her periods. *Mangala* was also performed when a woman became pregnant for the first time (*kuliyammé mangala*). A woman who had given birth to ten children, all of whom were alive, was entitled to a form of *mangala* known as *paitāndek alapa*.

A man who killed a panther or tiger had the right to *nari mangala* or 'tiger *mangala*' being performed in his honour. Marriage increased a man's status, and a bachelor was regarded as socially and ritually inferior to a married man. *Mangala* was performed to a bachelor's corpse before burying or cremating it, presumably in order to raise the status of the soul of the dead bachelor.

A man who had lost two wives in succession was ritually married to a plantain tree before marrying his third wife. The marriage to the plantain tree was called '*bālek mangala*', or '*plantain mangala*', and the tree was cut down soon after the *mangala*.

The number three, in certain contexts, is considered very unlucky everywhere in south India. When a man has lost his first two wives in succession, and intends marrying again, the third wife is considered certain to share the fate of the first two. The performance of '*bālek mangala*' and the cutting down of the tree soon after frees the human wife from the fate which would have otherwise overtaken her.

Formerly when a man built a new house he performed '*mané mangala*' or '*house mangala*'. *Mangala* was performed for the head of the house on this occasion. Another form of *mangala* which has entirely disappeared now is '*ettu mangala*' or '*ox mangala*'.

The ideal and usual marriage in Coorg is for a virgin to marry a bachelor and this is called '*kanni mangala*' or '*virgin mangala*'. The marriage rites are fullest when a virgin marries a bachelor, and they are abbreviated to some extent when a widower marries a virgin. They are still further abbreviated when a widow marries a widower, and many old Coorgs would even refuse to accord to such a marriage the name of *mangala*.

The ritual that is performed at the 'marriage of a virgin' may be divided into two parts, one which might be called the *mangala* part, and the other the non-*mangala* part. The *mangala*-part of marriage

courtiers joined in the mirth and the whole quadrangle rang with mixed shouts of the soldiers, the growl of the bear and the roar of the tiger. Of all the parties in this singular concert, the tiger appeared to be the most discomposed. His eye flashed fire, his tail waved from flank to flank in the most ominous style. I thought at one time, this was to turn out no laughing matter; for, if the angry animal, when at length he lost all patience, had taken a direction towards us, he might have demolished the dynasty of Wodear, or at least made a vacancy for an officer in his Britannic Majesty's Navy. Fortunately he chose exactly the opposite course, and running furiously across the court, made a flying leap right into one of the low windows of what the Rajah called his English drawing room. The glass and framework of the window were of course dashed to pieces in a moment and the pianos, pictures and book cases must have soon shared the same fate, had not the tiger's progress been checked by the weight of the wretched bear, which hung outside, half way between the window sill and the ground, somewhat after the fashion of the golden fleece over a mercer's door. The tiger we could no longer see, but we could hear him smashing the furniture at a great rate. He was afterwards secured and sent to the rear."

After a successful hunt for a tiger, the natives form a procession and carry the carcass with the band of tomtoms to the mandu or village green. The heroes of the day are the man who shot the beast and he who first touched its tail, a feat which used to be rewarded by the Rajah with the present of a silver bangle. The carcass is then raised on a wooden frame, and according to time-honored Coorg fashion, the lucky sportsman is to be wedded to the departed soul of the tiger and may thenceforth wear the honorable gala-mishi or grand mustachio in Rajah's fashion. In May last such a ceremony took place in Mercara on the occasion of

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224 C. Cariappah, the Subadar of the taluq, having shot a tiger.
 554 Under a screen, on a wedding chair, his face towards the
 • 588 carcass sat the hero of the day, clothed in Coorg warrior
 costume and covered with flower wreaths and gold ornaments.
 Behind him stood his armour-bearers, in front the sacred house
 lamp on a heap of rice, poured into a brass dish. First each
 [437] member of his house, men, women and children, then all his
 [514] friends, one by one, stepped up to the bridegroom; strewed
 a handful of rice from the brass dish over his head, gave him
 from a brass vessel a sip of milk to drink and in making obeisance,
 dropped a silver coin into his lap. This money is given with a view to defray the impending expenditure on a sumptuous dinner, given to the whole company. A Coorg dance round the tiger concludes the tamash and the night wears away with singing and feasting.

* 136 Government has now fixed a reward of Rupees five for
 [654] the destruction of a tiger and Rupees three for that of a cheeta;
 but the unmutilated skin with the claws¹ has to be delivered to the Sirkar. The height of the tiger varies from 3 to 4 and his length from 6 to 7 feet to which 3 feet may be added for the length of the tail. His weight is from 250 to 400 lbs.

[301] Sometimes one sees children with the ornament of 2 tiger's
 [789] claws, joined together by silver or gold and suspended round
 [825] the neck. This charm is supposed to keep off the evil eye.
 The age of a tiger is said to be ascertained by the number of lobes of his liver, one lobe being added every year!

The cheeta (*Can. kiruba*) or panther is more common than the tiger. It is a very destructive beast to smaller domestic animals. In his depredations he is a coward, chiefly attacking his prey by night and fleeing man, if unmolested.

[554] Upon the destruction of a cheeta by a Coorg, the same festivities, as on the tiger hunt, take place, but there is less honour to the sportsman. The skin of the cheeta is spotted with

¹ [Errata: this should read "claws." See corrigenda sheet, Cat. 116, P. 473--Analyst]